

Inmate's phone call leads to bust

By Jacob Brooks

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Trio tries to drop off painkillers, cash, work boots

FRANKLINTON - Three people were arrested last weekend when they attempted to drop off dozens of prescription painkillers, cash and even a new pair of work boots to a Rayburn Correctional Center inmate working at the Washington Parish Fairgrounds.

Jimmy Smith, 32, April Smith, 35, and Rodney Matlock, 63, were arrested by members of the Washington Parish Sheriff's Office drug task force March 29. All three have a Marrero address and were booked on two counts of conspiracy to possess narcotics with intent to distribute and other charges.

According to the arrest report, inmate Rickey Holmes, 31, at RCC in Angie made a phone call to Jimmy Smith the night before, requesting a delivery of pills, \$70 in cash and a new pair of work boots. The items were scheduled to be left in the rafters of the fairgrounds on the night of March 30. The phone call was monitored by prison officials, and WPSO was notified.

Drug task force members set up an observation point at a bathroom at the fairgrounds, and at 9:35 p.m. saw a woman - later identified as April Smith - exit a car and leave a stash of items near the rafters, according to the arrest report. The woman quickly went back to the vehicle, which was soon stopped by deputies for a traffic violation on Main Street, according WPSO.

In the rafters, deputies found 80 Xanax pills, 18 Soma pills, \$70 in cash and a new pair of work boots.

Also in the car with April Smith were Jimmy Smith, Matlock, who was driving, and two children - ages 2 and 10. The Louisiana Department of Social Services took custody of the children, according to the report. The suspects were also charged with attempted introduction of contraband into a penal institute and illegal use of a controlled dangerous substance in the presence of a person under 17.

Following the incident, Holmes and fellow inmate Keith Christmann, 50, were both placed on administrative segregation pending further disciplinary action, said RCC spokesperson Lynn McCloud. Christmann was involved because he financially helped arrange the purchase of drugs, McCloud said. On Monday, WPSO charged Holmes with attempted introduction of contraband into a penal institute.

The phone-call interception by an RCC guard using the "laser voice system," McCloud said.

"He was doing some random monitoring (and came across this drug deal)," he said.

Inmates are advised their phone calls are subject to random monitoring, McCloud added. Washington Parish Sheriff Aubrey Jones said he praises the actions of RCC and drug task force personnel, and the cooperation of the two agencies is an example of the continued effort to stop drug trafficking.